CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 22 June 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Jean Lint (Belgium)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 852nd meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like, at the outset, to welcome in our midst the new representatives to the Conference on Disarmament, the Ambassador of Chile, Mr. Juan Enrique Vega Patri, and the Ambassador of Hungary, Mr. Rudolph Joó, and to assure them of our cooperation and support.

On my list of speakers for today I have the representatives of China, Colombia and Finland. I call on the distinguished representative of China, Ambassador Hu.

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the important post of President of the Conference. I am confident that your outstanding diplomatic skills and rich experience will help us revitalize the work of the Conference. The Chinese delegation assures you of its full cooperation. I also take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Sergey Martynov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus, for his constructive efforts in seeking progress in our work

I would now like to turn our attention to two issues.

The first of these is prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). At its fifty-fourth session the United Nations General Assembly adopted, yet again by an overwhelming majority, resolution 54/53 on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, which reiterates that the Conference on Disarmament has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This has again demonstrated that most countries in the world are worried about the ominous prospect of an arms race in outer space and believe that the prevention of such a race is a real issue and a matter of urgency for the international community.

Based on superior political, economic, scientific and technical and military strength, a programme for the domination of outer space has already been formulated and set in motion, with a view to achieving unilateral military and strategic dominance. The most prominent examples of this process seen in the last two years are the development and planned deployment of the so-called national and theatre missile defence systems. Under this programme, some advanced weapon systems will be deployed in outer space or will target objects in outer space. Others, by using outer space as a platform, will provide targeting information and guidance for ground-based weapon systems. Even a layman can see that this programme will inevitably introduce the weapons or weapon systems in question into outer space, which will turn outer space into a new weapon base and a battlefield. This runs directly counter to the sincere aspirations of the international community to use outer space for peaceful purposes.

The development and deployment of the national missile defence system (NMD) will contravene the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty). Accordingly, there have been tenacious attempts to amend the Treaty, totally disregarding the grave consequences of overturning the Treaty as a cornerstone for maintaining global strategic

(Mr. Hu, China)

balance and stability. In fact, the so-called "phase one deployment" or "moderate amendments" represent the tip of an iceberg. Once the door for amendment is opened, large-scale deployment in different phases is bound to follow. The ABM Treaty will thus be increasingly weakened, leading to its final abolition. These negative developments will not only bring about the weaponization of outer space and an arms race in outer space, but will also jeopardize the global strategic balance and stability, disrupt the process of international nuclear disarmament and trigger off the proliferation of weapons on a global scale and another round of the arms race. All the achievements to date in the field of international arms control and disarmament are in danger of being forfeited.

Some people might ask: If the Conference on Disarmament conducts substantive work on PAROS, is this to be directed only against the national missile defence programmes of certain countries, or is it merely a political game played out among a few countries? The answer is no. The Chinese delegation believes that, under the agenda item on PAROS, the Conference on Disarmament should not confine itself to the issues mentioned above. On the contrary, it should cover more extensive areas, involving not only the issue of a strategic balance and the military and security situation on the ground, but also the common heritage of mankind - peace and tranquillity in outer space.

With the development of science and technology, the ability of humankind to explore and use outer space is also improving fast. Unfortunately, as shown by historical experience, advancements in science and technology are often applied to military use first and converted to help develop military capability and weapons technology. This leads to the fashioning of new military theories. More often than not, such a process results in a build-up of arms or even an arms race.

The science and technology of outer space are no exception to this rule. Some countries with advanced space technologies have already applied these technologies to the development of space weapons and the corresponding military theory has also been refashioned. Just as the development of aerospace technologies led to a build-up of arms and an arms race to achieve "domination of the air", we are now seeing, under the guidance of the military theory on the "domination of space", the emergence of a planned build-up of arms to "control space". All members of the international community should give close attention to these developments and should consider them carefully. If we seriously wish to prevent the emergence of an arms build-up, unilateral military advantage or an arms race in outer space, we must start work right now to study and to formulate the rules of the game to prevent an arms race in outer space, taking into account all relevant developments over the past decade.

In 1991, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on PAROS submitted, on his own initiative and as part of that year's annual report of the Conference on Disarmament, lists of topics corresponding to each of the three items of the Committee's programme of work. The lists recorded the work that the Committee had done on PAROS a decade ago. They may still provide some inspiration for our work today. I believe that, after 10 years, there will be some changes to the lists of issues which today's Committee needs to tackle and resolve. Indeed, to

(Mr. Hu, China)

achieve the objective of PAROS, we now face even more problems, which are both more complex and more pressing. China encourages all delegations and their outer space experts to join efforts in tackling the problems facing us.

For is it not our solemn responsibility, as entrusted to us by the international community, to conduct substantial work to address these problems in time? No longer can we afford to remain indifferent or to turn a blind eye to current developments. If we do not commence right now the negotiation of a legal instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space or an arms race in outer space, we will find ourselves having to negotiate disarmament or the prevention of the proliferation of weapons in outer space in the near future. For that reason, every possible measure should be taken to put a firm end to the current dangerous developments and to prevent the proliferation of weapons and an arms race in outer space.

At the current stage some international legal instruments on outer space are already in place, such as the 1963 Partial Test-Ban Treaty and the later Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, and the 1972 ABM Treaty. Some people believe that we only need to strengthen these treaties. In fact, although these treaties provide us with a starting point for our future work, the many loopholes and ambiguities which they contain mean that they cannot effectively address the new problems arising from these latest developments. Consequently, they are not capable of effectively preventing the weaponization of outer space or an arms race in outer space.

The Chinese delegation believes that, in addition to consolidating and reinforcing the existing international legal instruments on outer space and enhancing their effectiveness, the international community urgently needs to negotiate and conclude new legal instruments with a view to preventing an arms race in space, including the weaponization of outer space.

In this regard, the Conference on Disarmament has both the obligation and the ability to take on this important task. As the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament should focus its work in the area of arms control and disarmament on those issues that are most pressing, most prominent and most likely to influence international peace and security. PAROS is just one such issue. Accordingly, PAROS has every reason to be one of the priorities on the Conference's agenda. After PAROS was included on its agenda in 1982, the Conference set up ad hoc committees on the issue for 10 consecutive years, from 1985 to 1994, and much useful work was done during that period. In 1999, at its fifty-fourth session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, once again by an overwhelming majority, its resolution 54/53 on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The resolution unequivocally invites the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on PAROS as early as possible during its 2000 session and reiterates that the Conference has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. No country voted against it. Accordingly, the Chinese delegation believes that there should be no obstacle preventing the Conference on Disarmament from setting up the ad hoc committee on PAROS and conducting substantive negotiations on the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space.

(Mr. Hu, China)

The Chinese delegation maintains that the Conference on Disarmament should re-establish, in line with the wording of the proposal contained in document CD/1576, an ad hoc committee under agenda item 3, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", to negotiate and conclude an international legal instrument banning the testing, deployment and use of any weapons, weapons systems and their components in outer space. As for the basic framework of the new international legal instrument, the Chinese delegation has already put forward some tentative ideas in its paper CD/1606, presented to the Conference earlier this year. We hope that these ideas will at least encourage a fruitful debate. Together with all other parties concerned, we are ready to begin substantive work forthwith on developing and concluding the future legal instrument.

The second issue I would like to raise is the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President, to date the Conference has failed to conduct substantive work for more than three successive years. The direct reason for the stalemate is the difficulty posed by formulating a work programme. The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned by this situation. According to the Committee's rules of procedure, establishment of the programme of work is a prerequisite and the basis for the conduct of the Committee's substantive work. Accordingly, at the current stage, the Conference on Disarmament should first and foremost make every effort to formulate a programme of work acceptable to all parties.

The Chinese delegation holds that the following two factors must be taken into account in establishing the Conference's programme of work.

First, the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament should be considered as a whole and every item on its agenda should be approached in a comprehensive and balanced way. Given that different sides and parties insist on different priority items, a comprehensive and balanced approach offers the only guarantee for fair play and means of ensuring that proper account is taken of the interests and concerns of all States.

Second, the Committee's work is not conducted in a vacuum and the current international realities should not be ignored. Accordingly, the programme of work must confront, head on, the real problems of international security, particularly those developments which have major negative impacts on international peace and on arms control and disarmament.

Proceeding from these considerations, the Chinese delegation is prepared to give serious regard and active support to all proposals that meet the above requirements, including the establishment of negotiating mechanisms for the three agenda items, namely, PAROS, nuclear disarmament, and FMCT. To enable the Conference on Disarmament to start its substantive work as early as possible, the Chinese delegation is prepared, under your leadership and together with all other delegations, to map out a truly comprehensive and balanced programme of work. We also urge all other delegations to make the same effort, so that the Conference on Disarmament can soon break the deadlock and regain its prestige.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of China for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Colombia, Ambassador Reyes Rodríguez.

Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Colombia) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as this is the first time that I am taking the floor during this session, may I extend to you my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am convinced that your attested diplomatic skills and your broad experience will make it possible for us to reach the agreements necessary to break the stalemate in the Conference and to guide its activities towards substantive work. May I assure you, Mr. President, of my delegation's full support as you carry out your difficult undertaking.

Mr. President, at the fourteenth summit of heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, which took place in the city of Cartagena de Indias on 15 and 16 June 2000, the participants adopted the document entitled "Cartagena de Indias Declaration, Rio Group 2000: Commitment for the Millennium", which includes three paragraphs dealing with matters falling within the competence of this Conference.

The first such paragraph deals with nuclear disarmament and in it the heads of State and Government of the Rio Group affirm not only that "nuclear disarmament is the responsibility of all States, primarily those possessing nuclear weapons", but also that "it is incumbent on the international community to take specific steps to promote non-proliferation and the elimination of nuclear weapons". They also express their satisfaction with the outcome of the last Review Conference of the NPT and voice their support for the initiative on a new agenda for nuclear disarmament.

The second paragraph refers to the region's commitment to combating illicit trafficking in weapons and transnational organized crime.

The third paragraph calls on all States that have not yet done so to ratify the Ottawa Convention as soon as possible and to renew their commitment to the rehabilitation of victims and to the clearance of mines in the region. Support was also expressed for the prohibition of the use of excessively cruel or inhuman weapons.

Yesterday afternoon, Mr. President, I addressed a note to the Secretary-General requesting that the text of these paragraphs be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference, and on the very efficient way in which you have been conducting consultations and have brought us closer to an understanding with a view to starting real work. You can count on the full support of my delegation.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

During the past years, it has become almost a truism to state that the Conference on Disarmament is at a critical juncture. Still, I would persist in describing this as a critical moment. We have only a matter of days available to seal an agreement on a programme of work and to allow the Conference to move on to substantive work during the third round of this year's session. If we let this opportunity go by, we will risk having lost another year at the Conference.

The NPT Review Conference created new momentum in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The result, which was agreed to by consensus, was a victory for all States parties. The outcome is of prime importance to the NPT process. We see that it has a wider impact for pursuing further disarmament and non-proliferation goals. Needless to say, the outcome clearly shows that all problems and differences have not been settled. The process must continue through the faithful follow-up and implementation of the decisions taken.

The Conference on Disarmament should derive benefit from the successful NPT Conference. Here in the Conference, we also have to accept that it is not possible to settle all the differences all at once. Past efforts provide a good basis to assess what is achievable. We can identify fairly well those subject areas which should be included in an agreed programme of work.

I am confident that you, Mr. President, will make every effort towards a success. If we concentrate on what is possible and achievable, we can all help you in reaching agreement on a programme of work.

Your specific ideas, which in our reading we find welcome and timely, provide not only a basis for further consideration but a realistic and pragmatic solution for starting substantive work, and for starting it now. In our view, the various interests of participating States are well reflected in your approach.

For Finland, it is a key priority to get the FMCT negotiations truly under way. And as we understand the situation, all other delegations as well deem it important to start working on this question. For this purpose, the Conference has a mandate text that was agreed on by all delegations two years ago. As to nuclear disarmament, we agree with you, Mr. President, that we can take fresh guidance from the agreement reached recently in New York. Opening a dialogue on nuclear disarmament matters in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, could undoubtedly contribute to efforts that are being made in other arenas. Finland has always held the view that the START process is of particular importance. Now that the State Duma of the Russian Federation has ratified the START II Treaty, we are looking forward to the early entry into force of the Treaty and the commencement of the START III negotiations on further reductions, as was indicated by both parties earlier.

Mr. President, we concur with your view that the most reasonable way to proceed is to build on what has been agreed earlier and where common ground exists. If we look at the topics before us on which up to now there has been a large degree of convergence, I wonder what is still needed. We consider that the emerging programme of work meets quite substantive and ambitious standards.

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

As we have stated in the past, however, it is obvious that the pace and intensity of the deliberations on the items in the programme of work might vary, in line with the respective mandates and the preparatory work done earlier. This should be properly reflected in allocating time to different items in the programme of work?

It is widely acknowledged here that the Conference on Disarmament should not live in isolation from the outside world. The Conference should reflect the aspirations of the different participants in an appropriate way. None of us believes that all of our wishes can be met to the fullest extent; compromises are needed. Yet the decision-making procedure - namely, by consensus - will provide sufficient assurances that the vital national concerns of all delegations will be taken into account.

To conclude, I would like to express, on behalf of my delegation, our sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your tireless efforts. We hope that the Conference on Disarmament will take a constructive decision and start working on the issues which are familiar to us but which also merit careful and in-depth consideration.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Finland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. VEGA PATRI (Chile) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, in addition to congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference, I would like to thank you for the kind welcome which you accorded me and to assure all my colleagues that I shall try and establish the best relations and to cooperate with them to ensure that our joint work here is as productive as can be.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the distinguished representative of Chile and I wish him every success in his new responsibilities. His predecessor has left us with excellent memories of his time with us and I hope we will have the same relations with the new ambassador. I now call on the representative of Hungary, Ambassador Joó.

Mr. JOÓ (Hungary): Mr. President, I would like to thank you most sincerely for your kind words of welcome. At the same time, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of the continued support of my delegation and to add that I intend personally to contribute as fully as I can to the success of this body.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Hungary for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair and I wish him, too, success in his new duties in Geneva.

I would now like us to decide on the request addressed to the Conference by Côte d'Ivoire, that it might participate in the work of the session as an observer, even though we

(The President)

have not given the request prior consideration in an informal plenary meeting. The request is contained in document CD/WP.510, which you have before you. May I take it that the Conference agrees to this request?

It is so decided.

Before adjourning this meeting, I would like to inform you that the consultation process to develop consensus on the Conference's programme of work is continuing apace, both bilaterally and within groups. During yesterday afternoon's meeting, the group coordinators encouraged me to continue my endeavours to reach an agreement at the earliest possible stage. I can assure you that I shall devote all my energies during my last few days in this post to closing those gaps between positions on those issues which are still outstanding. I hope that the high-level contacts currently under way will also help in closing those gaps and creating conditions conducive to the emergence of a consensus. With that, we have concluded our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 29 June 2000, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.